

SPECIFICATION

Electronic Version 1.2.8

Stylesheet Version 1.0

DOUBLE DEAL

Background of Invention

Field of the Invention

[0001] The present invention relates to a poker game and, more particularly, to a poker game in which the player has an option of choosing between a first and a second hand dealt from separate decks of cards. More specifically, the present invention relates to a poker game that permits the player to reject an initial hand for a hidden, second hand, with an adjustment to the payout table also made upon a selection of the second hand, reflecting the changed odds.

Description of the Prior Art

[0002] The initial popularity of video poker machines was somewhat of a surprise to the gaming industry. It was not long before their popularity eclipsed the traditional slot machine. Various explanations followed to explain this phenomenon, and in more recent times a number of variations have been introduced in an effort to keep this concept fresh.

[0003] As originally offered, video poker was based on a game of five card draw, using a single deck of cards. An original five card hand is dealt, and the player elects which, if any, will be held. The non-held cards are discarded, and, using the same single deck, replacement cards are dealt to bring the card count up to five. This five card combination defines the "final hand," and the player's winnings, if any, are determined by a comparison of this hand to a payout table. Winning card combinations are paired with possible initial wagers to calculate payoffs.

[0004]

The spread of legalized gaming, particularly through Indian gaming expansion, has intensified the competition for players. In response video game manufacturers

have sought to design and provide different types of electronic video poker games. Subsequent modifications have included changes to the game itself, including the use of "wild cards," such as "jokers" and "deuces," as well as adapting seven-card stud poker, and similar variations, in a video game format.

[0005] Other modifications have been to the process of playing the game. As players familiar with video games become an increasing percentage of potential customers, casinos are demanding video poker machines that offer alternatives to the player. These options might include the ability to play multiple games of video poker for a single wager, or the ability to replay a hand, such as is disclosed in Cooper et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,045,129. A more recent innovation of play permits a player to select from two distinct hands at the beginning of a game, Dabrowski et al., U.S. Patent No. 5,356,140. Under this latter procedure, two distinct hands are dealt face up, from separate decks, and the player selects one of them for play, with the unselected hand voided or removed from view.

[0006] Notwithstanding these newer variations on the original video poker game, there continues to be a demand for new and interesting video poker games to maintain the interest of present gamblers while attracting the uninitiated. Studies of gaming psychology have indicated that the gambling experience is heightened by providing a player with additional or alternative opportunities for reward, but with an associated and unknown risk. There is a need for a video poker game that provides such alternative opportunities for a player, increasing the likelihood of initiating play of the machine, as well as the likelihood that a player will remain playing through multiple play cycles.

[0007] It is an object of the present invention to provide a method of playing a card game, either live or electronic, that encourages extended play time by providing additional play options of unknown risk/reward.

[0008] It is a feature of the present invention to provide a method of playing a card game in which a player is provide an option of rejecting an initial hand of known card values for a second hand of unknown card values that is dealt from a separate deck. Upon selection of the second deck, the first deck is removed, the card values of the second deck become known, and an adjustment is made to the payout tables to reflect the

odds benefit to the player of obtaining the second hand. The second hand is played out by the player in a conventional manner, and wins or losses are determined by the revised payout table.

[0009] It is an advantage of the present invention that more interest in the poker game is obtained by providing an optional replacement hand of unknown card values. The payback percentage is maintained by altering the payout table to accommodate the optional election of hands. The increased interest in playing combined with payout table adjustments results in increased profits to the gaming machine owner/operator.

[0010] These objects, as well as other objects and advantages of the present invention will become readily apparent upon review of the description of a non-limiting illustrative embodiment and the accompanying drawings.

Summary of Invention

[0011] Although appropriate for both live game and electronic gaming machines, the overwhelming popularity of gaming machine suggests the latter is the more likely platform for the present invention. Initiated in a conventional manner by the deposit a wager consisting of one or more coins, the player is dealt two separate hands from separate decks of playing cards (virtual in the case of a gaming machine). One of the hands is conventionally dealt face up, with the card values visible to the player. The second hand is dealt face down, concealing the card values. The player is presented with a choice: continue play with the first, face up hand or elect to play with the concealed, second hand.

[0012] After the choice is made, the unselected hand is removed and play of the hand proceeds in a conventional manner, with the player permitted to hold any combination of the playing cards, replacing those not held with new cards drawn from the same deck. Winning results, and the amount of money disgorged, are both determined by the payout table.

[0013] Alternatively, if the player elects to play the game with the second, concealed hand, the initial hand is removed, and the card values for the hidden hand are revealed. Play of the game then proceeds as discussed above, with certain cards held and replacement cards dealt to form the final hand. Winning results and award values

are again determined by a payout table. However, to account for the change in odds associated with the ability to replace the initial hand, the payout table changes if the concealed hand is chosen. This change may typically result in the elimination of the most common of the winning events. For example, many video poker machines will award "Jacks or better" with the return of the wager placed. A changed payout table in accordance with the present invention might eliminate this as a winning result, with the "lowest" payout table winning event listed as "two pair."

Brief Description of Drawings

[0014] Figure 1 shows a video screen display and payout table used in the method of the present invention prior to initiation of a game cycle; Figure 2 shows a video screen display and payout table used in the method of the present invention after the player has initiated play of the gaming machine; Figure 3 shows a video screen display and payout table used in the method of the present invention after the player has identified a hand to play; Figure 4 shows a video screen display and payout table used in the method of the present invention after the player has elected to play the initial hand; and Figure 5 shows a video screen display and payout table used in the method of the present invention after the player has elected to play the second or concealed hand.

Detailed Description

[0015] Reference is now made to the drawings wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout. In Figure 1, a video display screen 10 displays a player's first hand 14 and a player's second hand 18 with no card values shown. Traditionally, display screen for video poker games continue to display the card values of the last hand until a new play cycle is initiated. To communicate the availability of the second hand 18, this screen would occur at the conclusion of a play cycle, and remain until the initiation of a new play cycle.

[0016] The video display screen 10 also communicates other information to the player, including a credit display 22 where the number of remaining credits is shown, and a payout table 26 that establishes the identity of winning card combinations and the awards associated with each such winning combination. A plurality of control buttons 28 are also provided to operate various machine functions, including a collect button

32, a help button 34, a deal button 36, and a bet button 38. It is to be understood that other control functions may also be displayed, such as "bet maximum credits," without departing from the spirit or scope of the present invention.

[0017] Activation of the gaming machine is attained in a conventional manner by a player placing one or more coins or gaming tokens in an acceptor (not shown in the Figures) and then pressing first the bet control button 38, to establish the bet level, and then the deal control button 36. As is shown in Figure 2, upon such initiation, the card values for the player's first hand 14 are revealed, while the backs are shown for each of the cards of the player's second hand 18, concealing the card values. The two hands are shown in superposed relation to conserve screen space, and various other display arrangements are considered as lying within the scope of the present invention.

[0018] An instructional display 44 communicates a play option to a player, and in Figure 2, the player is advised of an ability to choose between the first and second hands 14, 18. Such selection can be made using many different mechanisms, with touch screen activation preferred based upon the technology presently in use with video gaming machines. In Figure 3, such a selection has been made, and a confirming message 48 appears on the video display screen 10 requesting the player to confirm his or her prior selection as between the first and second hands 14, 18.

[0019] Figure 3 displays the election by a player of the first hand 14. The second hand 18 is removed from view, and a plurality of hold option buttons 52 appear, one adjacent each of the playing cards of the first hand 14. Upon activation by a player, such as by touching where a touch screen is provided, the hold button 52 is transformed into a held indicator button, communicating to a player that the associated playing card is being "held" under game rules. Thereafter, play continues in a conventional video poker manner, with all non-held cards replaced by new cards drawn from the same deck. The resulting playing card selection defines the "final hand," and this hand is compared to the winning card combinations identified by the payout table 26.

[0020] Figure 4 displays the election by a player of the second hand 18 a hand that until this election had concealed the individual playing card values from the player. The card values are then revealed, and play continues as was discussed in the context of

Figure 3, above. The hold option buttons 52 are activated by the player as required, with the more desirable cards held and the less desirable replaced by new cards. The final playing card combination is then compared to the winning combinations identified by a modified payout table 26a. Such modification by a removed winning combination 62 (shown in phantom in Figure 5) accommodates the change of odds in the player's favor resulting from the ability of a player to make this election between the first and second hands 14, 18.

[0021] My invention has been disclosed in terms of a preferred embodiment thereof, which provides a method of playing a card game that is of great novelty and utility. Various changes, modifications, and alterations in the teachings of the present invention may be contemplated by those skilled in the art without departing from the intended spirit and scope thereof. It is intended that the present invention encompass such changes and modifications.